

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2014

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 114

Introduced by Assembly Members Campos and Alejo

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Allen, Ammiano, Atkins, Bloom, Bocanegra, Bonilla, Bonta, Bradford, Brown, Buchanan, Ian Calderon, Chau, Chávez, Chesbro, Cooley, Dababneh, Daly, Dickinson, Eggman, Fong, Fox, Frazier, Gatto, Gomez, Gonzalez, Gordon, Gorell, Gray, Grove, Hall, Holden, Levine, Linder, Lowenthal, Maienschein, Melendez, Mullin, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nestande, Olsen, Pan, Perea, John A. Pérez, V. Manuel Pérez, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Rendon, Ridley-Thomas, Rodriguez, Salas, Skinner, Stone, Ting, Wagner, Waldron, Weber, Wieckowski, Wilk, and Williams)

February 25, 2014

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 114—Relative to César Chávez.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 114, as amended, Campos. César Chávez.

This measure would call upon all Californians to observe César Chávez's birthday, March 31, as a day of public service, to recognize the hard work and self-sacrifice that farmworkers go through to feed all the families in our state, and to learn from César Chávez's life and his mission of nonviolence, social justice, and selfless service to others.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, César Estrada Chávez is one of the most significant
- 2 civil rights leaders in the history of our nation. César Chávez
- 3 recognized that the dignity of a society can be measured by the

1 dignity by which the people who help feed our nation are treated;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, César Chávez experienced the hardships and
4 injustices of farmworker life firsthand. He was born on March 31,
5 1927, in the North Gila River Valley in Arizona, on the small
6 family farm his grandfather homesteaded. César Chávez's father
7 lost the farm during the Great Depression, forcing the family to
8 join some 30,000 farmworkers who followed the crops throughout
9 California and lived in tents and makeshift housing that often
10 lacked a bathroom, electricity, or running water; and

11 WHEREAS, César Chávez understood the value of education
12 as a path to a better life because he left school after completing
13 the 8th grade to work full time, helping to support his family in
14 the fields. Later in life, César Chávez became self-educated through
15 his passion for reading; and

16 WHEREAS, Although later a pacifist, in 1946, César Chávez
17 enrolled and served his country in the United States Navy. He was
18 honorably discharged whereupon he married Helen Fabela and
19 eventually settled in the East San Jose barrio nicknamed "Sal Si
20 Puedes" ("Get Out if You Can") to raise a family that eventually
21 numbered eight children; and

22 WHEREAS, In San Jose, César Chávez was introduced to the
23 social teachings of the Catholic Church and trained in peaceful
24 community organizing strategies at McDonnell Hall, historically
25 known as Guadalupe Mission Chapel. César Chávez and Fred
26 Ross, an organizer for the Community Service Organization (CSO),
27 established CSO chapters across California and Arizona during
28 the 1950s, helping Latinos register to vote, pushing for basic public
29 services and infrastructure in the barrios, peacefully battling police
30 brutality and racial discrimination, and creating the most effective
31 Latino civil rights group of its era; and

32 WHEREAS, In 1962, after failing to convince the CSO to let
33 him organize farmworkers, César Chávez resigned from the only
34 decent paying job he ever held and moved his wife and eight
35 children to Delano, California. There, with \$1,200 in life savings
36 that was soon gone, César Chávez, his family, and close friends
37 began building the National Farm Workers Association, which
38 later became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW); and

39 WHEREAS, In 1965, in a partnership with a union of Filipino
40 American farmworkers, César Chávez organized a major strike

1 against grape growers in California. The following year, in 1966,
2 César Chávez led an unprecedented 340-mile march, from Delano
3 to Sacramento, that placed the farmworkers' plight before the
4 conscience of the American people. Supporters carried slogans
5 with the words "HUELGA" (strike) and "VIVA LA CAUSA"
6 (long live our cause), advocating for improved compensation and
7 labor conditions. Later efforts, including a 25-day fast by César
8 Chávez, resulted in the enactment of California's historic
9 Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first and still the
10 only law in the nation to "encourage and protect" the right of
11 farmworkers to organize and bargain with their employers; and

12 WHEREAS, Through countless strikes, boycotts, marches, and
13 fasts that produced many victories and some defeats, César Chávez,
14 who even considered vegetarianism an integral part of living
15 nonviolently, never stopped his peaceful battles on behalf of the
16 farmworkers with whom he shared his life. His dedication to his
17 work earned him the respect of some of our greatest political and
18 civil rights leaders, including Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King
19 Jr., and Jesse Jackson. César Chávez's motto in life, "Sí Se Puede!"
20 or "Yes We Can!" has served as an inspiration not only for Latinos,
21 but for working Americans of all walks for life; and

22 WHEREAS, In 1993, César Chávez died peacefully in his sleep
23 in San Luis, Arizona. During funeral services in Delano, 40,000
24 people marched in procession behind his plain pine casket. They
25 came to affirm César Chávez's words from his landmark 1984
26 address to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco: "Once social
27 change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the
28 person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person
29 who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid
30 anymore"; and

31 WHEREAS, Although César Chávez was uncomfortable with
32 personal recognition in life, since his passing Chávez has been
33 honored in hundreds of communities. César Chávez was awarded
34 "El Aguila Azteca" (the Aztec Eagle), Mexico's highest award
35 presented to people of Mexican heritage. In 1994, President Bill
36 Clinton posthumously presented César Chávez with America's
37 highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2006,
38 California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger inducted César
39 Chávez into the first class of the California Hall of Fame. In 2011,
40 the United States Navy announced naming the latest Lewis and

1 Clark-class cargo ship being built in San Diego the USNS César
2 Chávez; and

3 WHEREAS, In 2012, in recognition of the impact of César
4 Chávez to our nation's and state's history, President Barack Obama
5 established the César E. Chávez National Monument at Nuestra
6 Senora Reina de la Paz in Keene, California and concurrently
7 designated La Paz as a National Historical Landmark. In 2013, La
8 Paz, which is César Chávez's final resting ground, McDonnell
9 Hall, located in San Jose, California, the former site of the UFW
10 headquarters, known as the Forty Acres, the Filipino Community
11 Hall in Delano, California, and the 1966 march route from Delano
12 to Sacramento were four of five sites, out of 100, found to be
13 nationally significant for a National Historic Park honoring César
14 Chávez. In 2013, McDonnell Hall (formerly Guadalupe Mission
15 Chapel) was designated a State Historical Landmark for its close
16 association with the life and work of César Chávez; and

17 WHEREAS, Since César Chávez's passing, the UFW has
18 continued his work through organizing farmworkers and campaigns
19 to enact laws and regulations to bring dignity and protections to
20 farmworkers. Meanwhile, the César Chávez Foundation continues
21 improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of farmworkers and
22 other low-wage working families through 30 high-quality
23 affordable housing communities it has built or renovated and
24 manages in four states, a network of nine popular educational
25 Spanish-language radio stations in three states, after-school tutoring
26 for disadvantaged students in two states, and the National Chávez
27 Center, including a visitor center, memorial gardens, and
28 educational center on 187 acres in the Tehachapi Mountains where
29 César Chávez lived and worked, and is buried; and

30 WHEREAS, César Chávez successfully increased public
31 awareness of farmworker working conditions. To many
32 Californians the farmworkers' struggles are an issue from the past,
33 a belief reflected by the fact that farmworker suffering typically
34 takes place in remote areas far from cities, thereby rendering
35 farmworkers invisible to our society. The fruits and vegetables
36 that we enjoy in our daily lives are produced by farmworkers who
37 often endure long hours of backbreaking work and still face
38 challenges such as inadequate enforcement of pesticide, safety,
39 and labor protection laws in the fields; and

1 WHEREAS, Farmworkers still dream of providing a better life
2 for their children, but the reality of having to move from crop to
3 crop makes this dream hard to achieve. Economic forces and the
4 rising cost of living have pushed farmworkers further into poverty;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Legislature passed and Governor Gray
7 Davis signed into law Senate Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes
8 of 2000), to create the first annual state holiday in the country on
9 César Chávez's birthday, March 31, in recognition of César Chávez
10 as the most important Latino leader in the United States during
11 the 20th century. Under that law, the State Board of Education
12 also created a statewide curriculum on César Chávez and
13 encourages schools across the state to engage teachers and students
14 in service learning projects as a way of honoring the legendary
15 farm labor and civil rights leader; now, therefore, be it

16 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
17 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians
18 to observe César Chávez's birthday, March 31, as a day of public
19 service; and be it further

20 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians to
21 recognize the hard work and self-sacrifice that farmworkers go
22 through to feed all the families in our state; and be it further

23 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians to
24 learn from César Chávez's life and his mission of nonviolence,
25 social justice, and selfless service to others; and be it further

26 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
27 of this resolution to the Chávez family, particularly César Chávez's
28 widow, Helen Chávez, the United Farm Workers of America, the
29 César Chávez Foundation, and the author for appropriate
30 distribution.